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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR MEETS WITH NORTHWEST FRONTIER PROVINCE GOVERNOR GHANI CONCERNING INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS, OPERATIONS AND QUICK REACTION FORCES

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REASON: 1.4 (a), (b), (d)

Summary

¶1. (C) Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) Governor Owais Ghani met with Ambassador and Peshawar Principal Officer on January

¶27. Ghani said that "while major military operations are over in Bajaur and Mohmand, the problems are not." Each agency would have one to three Quick Reaction Forces (QRF), each with their own dedicated artillery and tanks. Ghani stated internally displaced persons (IDPs) returning to Bajaur would need two months of food, fuel wood and assistance to rebuild their homes.

In response to calls for speeding up the pace of justice, Ghani intends to expand a pilot alternative dispute resolution project that has allowed the quick settlement of simple civil cases at police stations by a committee of community leaders. Funding for the QRFs in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) as well as the police in the NWFP is an ongoing challenge for provincial leaders. End Summary.

Major Military Operations Over

¶2. (C) Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) Governor Owais Ghani met with Ambassador and Peshawar Principal Officer on January

¶27. In addition, Peshawar Pol/Econ Chief attended the meeting.

¶3. (C) Ghani told the Ambassador that "while major military operations in Bajaur and Mohmand are over, the problems are not." He explained that pockets of resistance were still present in Bajaur, Mohmand, and Khyber where they had been conducting operations recently, but the GOP was moving into a "Quick Reaction Force" (QRF) mode in each of the agencies. Some operations may be conducted where an area will be cordoned off and forces sent in to hit specific targets.

Swat Ambush of Militants

¶4. (C) Ghani stated that after militants had repeatedly dropped bodies of their victims at a well known intersection in the Swat valley, the GOP set up an ambush. The ambush killed 5 militants

and then left their bodies at the same intersection, which ended the practice in that area.

QRF-Mode: A New Approach

¶ 15. (C) Ghani said each agency would have one to three QRF forces available, each with their own dedicated artillery and tanks. The tanks will be deployed in "troops" of three with six to nine total tanks per agency. He stated that the QRF will be ready to react in a "couple of hours" to situations as they arose with direct cooperation between the local military commander and the Political Agent. He expected the QRF Mode of operations to last at least six to twelve months.

Khyber PA Directs First Use of QRF

¶ 16. (C) As evidence of the new QRF strategy, Ghani cited a recent military action in Khyber agency ordered by the Khyber PA from the Governor's Office. He said that during a meeting in the Governor's Office, the PA received a call on his cell phone with actionable information concerning militants in Khyber. Based on the new arrangement, the PA gave specific instructions to the local commandant who took immediate action against militants near Landi Kotal. The QRF action quickly "dealt with" the militants in the area with minimal interruption of the Peshawar-Landi Kotal route. (Note: The Peshawar-Landi Kotal route is a principal supply route for NATO supplies entering Afghanistan. End Note.) Ghani added that during the recent Bajaur operations, the relationship between the Frontier Corps and the Political Agent had been excellent with the PA giving the military instructions of who to "hit."

What IDPs Need

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¶ 17. (C) Responding to Ambassador's query about what the NWFP needed to resettle IDPs in Bajaur, Ghani stated the government would need two months of food support, fuel wood, and help rebuilding their homes when they return probably in April. He explained that most of the labor to rebuild their homes could come from the IDPs themselves, but they would need funds to buy timber and plastic sheets for roofing materials. He stated that 50,000 rupees per family should be sufficient for the house reconstruction efforts, and he favors direct cash to families via tribal leaders as it would help to bring business back to the area, reinvigorating the local economy. (Note: Rs 50,000 is approximately USD 650. End note.)

Police Funding?

¶ 18. (C) Responding to Ambassador's statement of potential additional police assistance Ghani asserted that a planned meeting January 24 between himself, President Zadari, and NWFP Chief Minister Hoti to discuss additional funding for the NWFP Police was cancelled and not rescheduled. Ghani said that the official reason for the cancellation was the absence of the Finance Minister, but he asserted that the real reason was that the GOP did not have the funds to pay for the needed assistance. Ghani made a plea for assistance to raise additional police forces, increase their pay, and provide more equipment and training.

Dispute Resolution At Police Stations

¶ 19. (C) Ghani described a pilot project in Abbottabad employing an alternative dispute resolutions mechanism aimed at responding to the calls for quicker justice, an area where local taliban have taken an advantage by setting up parallel courts that dispense "speedy" justice. Under the project, simple civil disputes are decided at police stations by a committee of

"esteemed" community leaders who serve with no salary on a rotating basis. Ghani said that for issues involving property, family issues, rental and other business disputes each committee convening at its local police station is empowered to make judgments. There are no court costs to either litigant and cases are decided within 15 calendar days. Of the 2000 cases decided in October and November of 2008, only three had gone to higher courts. Ghani said that he intends to expand the project, but he did not provide a date.

Next Actions

¶10. (C) Ghani said that as the QRFs were being put in place and new Maliks appointed, the GOP would move to reward areas that had resisted the militants. He said this strategy would revive the tribal system and be successful, because he has started to see signs that up to 50 percent of the militants funding has been cut off. He cited as evidence the cost of an AK-47 rising to USD 1,000 from a previous low of USD 500 and one round of ammunition for an AK-47 rising recently to USD .50 from a previous low of USD .10.

Comment

¶11. (C) Ghani's plan to have QRFs in the FATA (if fully implemented) and expansion of an alternative dispute resolution mechanism are steps that could boost morale among security forces and help build public confidence and support for local governing institutions. In the settled areas, finding the funding to man, train, and equip the police remains the NWFP government's core security challenge.

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